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on Tuesday, 16 July 1996, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. GERVAIS (Côte d'Ivoire)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

COORDINATION QUESTIONS (continued)

(b) INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF INFORMATICS (E/1996/81)

Mr. SEVAN (Assistant Secretary-General for Conference and Support Services), introducing the report of the Secretary-General in document E/1996/81, said that, for a number of reasons, the United Nations system had fallen behind in information technology and had not been able to adjust to the rapidly changing environment. The lack of a global information technology strategy had resulted in dramatic budgetary reductions at precisely the time when new investments were called for. Nonetheless, there had been considerable progress in improving the capability for providing Member States with access to United Nations information. The Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on the Need to Harmonize and Improve United Nations Information Systems for Optimal Utilization and Accessibility by all States had facilitated the dialogue between Member States, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Secretariat.

The report of the Secretary-General (E/1996/81) reflected a new approach to the issue of access by Member States to United Nations information. However, owing to the lack of a global information technology strategy, an overview of current information technology activities throughout the Organization was not available, which meant that the report was incomplete. The details of such a strategy, which would encompass all Member States, would be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session. It would address not only Headquarters, but also the regional commissions, which were particularly in need of physical and human resources. An upgrade of the infrastructure at all duty stations was essential if the Organization was to meet the rapidly growing requirements in information technology and if Member States were to take full advantage of the facilities that information technology could provide.

Mr. KAMAL (Pakistan), speaking as Chairman of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on the Need to Harmonize and Improve United Nations Information Systems for Optimal Utilization and Accessibility by all States, said the Working Group had been established to monitor the implementation of the relevant

resolutions of the Economic and Social Council and ensure that Member States had easy, economical and unhindered access through their permanent missions to the computerized databases and information systems of the United Nations. The Working Group had focused on three tasks: increasing connectivity between the permanent missions and the United Nations system by bringing more missions on-line; initiating training programmes in the use of the Internet for officials of permanent missions; and identifying, and where possible eliminating, the impediments preventing access to the United Nations databases and information systems.

The Working Group had established a small technical sub-group, assisted by staff from the United Nations Secretariat and UNDP, which met relatively frequently and, because of the sustained commitment of its participants, had been able to achieve significant progress. Thanks to UNDP, which had agreed to handle a large part of the project, an increase of 25 per cent in connectivity had been achieved in the past six months. The first phase of the training programme for officials in the permanent missions had begun, and additional training sessions were planned for the near future.

The greatest difficulties encountered had been the impediments, caused primarily by ineffective modems, which had been experienced by missions when accessing UNDP servers. The number of modems had been increased to almost double the original number, their quality improved and the applicable software upgraded, resulting in greater connectivity through UNDP. However, a more intractable problem impeding accessibility resided within the United Nations Secretariat, whose e-mail system was insufficiently integrated. For its part, the Secretariat had taken a very important step to facilitate access by establishing a home page on the Internet. Many documents were now readily available through the United Nations Web site, which had been rated one of the top 100 Web sites on the Internet. There remained the challenge of providing connectivity between the difficult-to-access optical disk system and the user-friendly United Nations Web site.

The immediate objectives of the Working Group included providing connectivity to all 185 Member States, working towards a uniform e-mail system which all permanent missions could access easily, establishing connectivity between the optical disk system and the United Nations Web site, and encouraging the posting of information on the World Wide Web server in a systematic and

computer-literate manner. The Secretariat would have to give greater priority than in the past to the question of effecting savings by employing information technology to a much fuller degree. The Working Group had concluded that considerable savings could be made by improving accessibility for permanent missions, since the United Nations could then reduce costs for printing documents. Videoconferencing also provided a promising avenue for cost reductions through savings on travel and per diem expenditures.

The members of the Working Group had concluded that, despite repeated resolutions passed by the Economic and Social Council in recent years, the importance of informatics to Member States had not been fully grasped by the United Nations Secretariat. It was entirely possible for States to secure technology transfers and technical expertise directly from the Internet rather than depend exclusively on the traditional procedures of the development agencies. The Working Group had noted a lack of enthusiasm on the part of the Secretariat in following up on initiatives and providing recommendations to Member States as to how they could exploit the informatics revolution. The Secretariat would have to demonstrate greater keenness and technical cooperation if the Group was to accomplish its tasks. The alternative might be to outsource informatics-related tasks to more efficient commercial firms and significantly reduce the strength of the concerned United Nations departments.

Mr. ACUÑA (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the United Nations had a critical role to play in enabling Member States to benefit from recent developments in informatics. As a first step, the Organization should make its own extensive databases freely accessible to Member States by eliminating any technical obstacles that hindered connectivity between the permanent missions and the United Nations information system. There was also a need to upgrade the level of expertise in the permanent missions through appropriate training programmes. His delegation endorsed the Working Group's proposals to improve the connection between the United Nations Internet facility and the optical disk system and to introduce videoconferencing, which would not only increase the availability of information but also save costs and promote efficiency.

Mr. AVALLE (Argentina) said that the Working Group had made genuine reforms possible by promoting technical solutions and facilitating access by the permanent missions to United Nations databases. His delegation firmly supported

the tangible results of the Working Group and urged the Economic and Social Council to give it the support it deserved.

Mr. DISEKO (South Africa) commended the Working Group on the progress achieved thus far in discharging its mandate. Informatics could make a major contribution to equity, development and progress, enabling countries which lagged behind to reach more advanced stages of development. However, those without electronic connectivity were at a disadvantage.

His country, recognizing the enormous potential of informatics, had recently hosted an Information Society and Development Conference, which it believed had been the first major conference of developed and developing countries on how informatics could contribute to the development of developing countries.

His delegation fully supported the proposal to improve the connectivity of permanent missions to the United Nations to the wealth of United Nations material available in electronic form. Technical assistance should be provided to delegations on request, in particular, those from Africa and the least developed countries. Harmonization and simplification of United Nations system databases were of paramount importance and the continued involvement of United Nations intergovernmental machinery in that process must be ensured. In conclusion, he said that his delegation agreed that authorization should be given to convene the Working Group for another year, utilizing existing resources.

Mr. RUDENSKIY (Russian Federation) said that the Working Group had played an important role in enhancing access to United Nations information databases. His delegation appreciated the work of UNDP in assisting missions to access the Internet and for its willingness to help them create Web pages to be hosted on its server. His own delegation was in the process of preparing such a page. It welcomed the steps taken by the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development to place information on the United Nations Web server. Improvements were needed to enhance the on-line availability of material from other United Nations departments. A reliable search engine for United Nations resolutions was required, along the lines of the mechanism available for press releases.

Improvements were required in the interests of the harmonization and coordination of structures for locating information. For example, on-line

documentation should be available in all working languages, and a strategy for United Nations information systems was required. Guidelines also were needed to assist missions in preparing their Web pages: for example, appropriate information fields should be devised, to serve as the basis for a future full-text search mechanism, and provision should be made for links with relevant Internet sites. He drew attention to the recommendation which the Commission on Sustainable Development had addressed at its fourth session to the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development regarding the establishment of a sustainable development home page on the Web and to the recommendations of the Committee on Natural Resources regarding the development of a global geochemical database and the potential of natural resources for sustainable development.

Enhanced international cooperation on informatics would save considerable resources. For example, according to the Department of Public Information (DPI), in 1995 alone nearly 2.8 million pages of documentation generated by organizations in the United Nations system had been transmitted electronically.

Ms. LEBL (United States of America) said that her delegation appreciated the work of the United Nations in the field of information management, computerization and telecommunication, and that the Working Group had made laudable progress in establishing electronic links between the Secretariat and the permanent missions.

It was important to develop a coordinated United Nations information management and telecommunication strategy. The key United Nations bodies, in particular UNDP, DPI and the Electronic Services Division, should continue their close cooperation with interested missions. In conclusion, her delegation agreed that the Working Group should continue to function.

Ms. SIBAL (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) said that UNESCO had initiated international cooperation in the field of informatics in the early 1980s. Its Intergovernmental Informatics Programme (IIP), established in 1985, had supported 306 projects in developing countries. UNESCO cooperated with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in the field of informatics.

Since 1995, UNESCO cooperation with other United Nations specialized agencies, in particular, ITU and UNDP, had focused on Africa, Central Asia and

the Arab States, and she described a number of projects in those regions. UNESCO was focusing on networks for information exchange, through such initiatives as INFORMAFRICA, a programme designed to strengthen skills in information technologies in Africa; the Regional Informatics Network for Africa (RINAF), which aimed to develop human resources through the provision of training, hardware, software and expertise; and the Regional Informatics Network for Arab States - which had the same goals as RINAF - under which the Regional Arab Information Network had been established to foster the exchange of information and network development in the public and private sectors.

UNESCO used the latest developments in information and communication technology as vehicles for its education programmes and was very conscious of the important role which such technology could play in reducing disparities in access to different types and levels of education, through distance learning. A number of UNESCO projects focused on building and strengthening global partnerships in the use of information and communication technologies for extended learning opportunities. The second International Congress entitled "Education and informatics: strengthening international cooperation", held recently in Moscow, had dealt with various relevant issues, including international cooperation in the field of education and informatics and the role of UNESCO in such cooperation. UNESCO would inform the Council of the results of the Congress in due course.

Mr. MONTOYA (Colombia) said that ensuring the electronic access of delegations to United Nations information should be a high priority and that his delegation appreciated the efforts of the Working Group in that area. It was important to take advantage of the experience of UNDP and the availability of the Internet and to ensure that measures to that end were accomplished at the lowest possible cost. Consideration should be given to gradually connecting national capitals, while continuing to provide education and training to permanent missions.

His delegation hoped that the momentum achieved in providing electronic connectivity to Member States would be maintained, at least through the coming biennium. Inter-agency cooperation should be fostered to that end, and the Secretariat should keep the permanent missions informed of progress in that area. All permanent missions should be connected to the system by the end of 1997 at the latest, a goal which was attainable. His delegation agreed that the

Working Group should continue to function and was a sponsor of the draft resolution on the subject.

Mr. YU Qingtai (China) said that the Working Group had made excellent progress. Priority should be given to devising a strategy for utilizing technological progress in the United Nations. His delegation agreed that the Working Group should continue its valuable work.

Mrs. REBONG (Philippines) said that the Working Group had achieved impressive results which were worthy of emulation in other working groups. The Working Group should continue to function until its objectives had been attained.

Mr. RAMOUL (Observer for Algeria) commended the Working Group on its achievements. The report showed that significant progress had been made in a number of areas and admitted what shortcomings had to be overcome. His delegation strongly endorsed the recommendation that the Working Group should continue to function, given the tangible benefits of its work, in particular for developing countries.

Mr. HAMDAN (Lebanon) supported the recommendation that the Working Group should continue to function and agreed that adequate coordination on informatics was required among the relevant United Nations bodies. The importance of ensuring that Member States had access to United Nations electronic databases was properly emphasized in the report. His delegation hoped that videoconferencing would be available soon.

Ms. FIGUERA (Venezuela) welcomed the report of the Working Group, in particular, the emphasis placed on full access by Member States to updated United Nations databases and the need for more user-friendly access, and the recognition of the importance of training to enable mission personnel to utilize available resources most effectively. The secretariat of UNDP had made a significant contribution in those areas.

Mr. SEVAN (Assistant Secretary-General for Conference and Support Services) said that the comments of all delegations would be taken into account and that the expressions of support for an advanced information system were most welcome. Once a credible information system plan had been worked out, adequate funding would be needed.

He fully agreed that there should be no duplication of effort among United Nations bodies concerned with information technology. He pointed out that

videoconferencing was available to delegations at Headquarters for a nominal fee. In conclusion, he said that the Secretariat was fully committed to supporting the work of the Working Group.

The PRESIDENT suggested that the Council should take note of the report of the Secretary-General on international cooperation in the field of informatics (E/1996/81).

It was so decided.

ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTIONS: REPORTS OF SUBSIDIARY BODIES, CONFERENCES AND RELATED QUESTIONS (continued)

(f) POPULATION QUESTIONS (E/1996/25)

Ms. SADIK (Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)), reporting to the Council on the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 50/124, said that the Cairo consensus was anchored in a human rights approach, which recognized the critical importance of meeting the needs of individual women and men and improving the quality of their lives. It called particular attention to reproductive rights as a key element in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women. Over the past two years, a good start had been made in implementing the goals agreed to at the Conference. A concerted effort was being made to implement an integrated approach to population and development at the country level, taking into account the range of social-sector needs constituting the enabling environment; to place family planning in the broader context of reproductive health; to expand partnerships with all groups in civil society and with the private sector; and to meet the needs of vulnerable and neglected groups.

The Inter-Agency Task Force on the Implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development had done much to accelerate implementation at the country level. Its Guidelines for the United Nations Resident Coordinator System, its Common Advocacy Statement and its Guidance Note on Issues in International Migration and Development had been widely disseminated and were being used in advocacy efforts and by country theme groups in many countries. In October 1995, the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) had reconstituted the task force as the ACC Task Force on Basic Social Services for All (BSSA), chaired by UNFPA. The BSSA Task Force had set up two working groups, one on primary health care, with WHO as the lead

agency, and another on basic education, headed by UNESCO. In producing guidelines, the groups would be addressing sectoral issues, taking into account a number of cross-cutting concerns. The BSSA Task Force planned to produce a number of other materials: a compilation of "Best Practices/Lessons Learned"; a wall chart showing social indicators for each country; a concise compendium of international treaties and conventions pertaining to the social sector; and an advocacy "pocket card" containing key points for promoting basic social services for all. UNICEF would make available the indicators and methodology it had used to monitor the goals of the World Summit for Children. A number of activities were being continued, including working groups on reproductive health and on international migration and work on common data systems for tracking infant, child and maternal mortality. The task forces were working in a complementary manner, avoiding duplication and promoting collaboration with broader United Nations system-wide initiatives.

A number of surveys conducted over the past year indicated that many countries were already reorienting their family-planning programmes to correspond with the broader reproductive rights/reproductive health framework of the Programme of Action. Greater attention was being focused on the quality of care, the involvement of men, services for adolescents, and the involvement of women's groups. Several Governments had taken steps to decentralize public health services in order to expand community participation and enhance partnerships with non-governmental organizations and the private sector. Many countries had held workshops to consider policy issues and programmatic concerns and identify modalities for implementing a reproductive health framework congruent with their own situations. UNFPA had worked extensively with countries to facilitate and accelerate the transition to a reproductive health approach, drawing on WHO technical and norm-setting protocols. It had supported efforts to train medical and paramedical staff, improve infrastructure, develop medical standards and increase the availability of reproductive health services.

Gender concerns were increasingly being taken into account in programme design and implementation; UNFPA had recently sponsored a Technical Consultation on Female Genital Mutilation, held in Addis Ababa. It had also convened a number of consultations to select and develop appropriate indicators for programme monitoring and impact assessment, and for tracking progress in achieving conference goals. The UNFPA Non-Governmental Organization Advisory

Committee had urged UNFPA to strengthen non-governmental organization capacity and promote non-governmental organization-Government dialogue.

UNFPA was providing substantive and administrative assistance to Partners in Population and Development, an intergovernmental organization which worked to promote South-South cooperation in reproductive health. It was also supporting centres of excellence in reproductive health in Indonesia, Mexico, Thailand and Tunisia.

The resources available for funding the Programme of Action were clearly inadequate. Countries themselves must make a concerted effort to mobilize resources, and the international community must do its part. The 20/20 initiative would help those processes. The private and non-governmental sectors also had an important role to play. Developed countries were currently the largest source of international assistance, contributing some 81 per cent of the total.

She drew attention to decisions 95/15 and 96/15 of the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board, which had enhanced the capacity of UNFPA to implement the Programme of Action. Decision 95/15 supported the broad outline of the future programme of assistance of UNFPA and endorsed the core programme areas; decision 96/15 endorsed a new approach for the allocation of UNFPA resources.

Mr. CHAMIE (Director, Population Division) said that the Commission on Population and Development was the first tier of the three-tiered system established for monitoring the implementation of the Programme of Action; it had primary responsibility for reviewing the follow-up to the Programme of Action. At the Commission's twenty-ninth session, from 26 February to 1 March 1996, the central theme had been "Reproductive rights and reproductive health" relating to chapter VII of the Cairo Programme of Action. The Commission had considered follow-up actions to the recommendations of the Conference and approved a draft resolution for adoption by the Council. It had also adopted a resolution on the work programme in the field of population. In preparation for the Commission's thirtieth session, the Population Division was currently preparing a monitoring report on the state of knowledge in the area of international migration and development. The report would follow the outline and substantive issues presented in chapter X of the Programme of Action.

The work programme of the Population Division was intended to provide the scientific basis for monitoring the implementation of the Programme of Action.

Mrs. CASTRO de BARISH (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development should be applied in the context of the results of other international conferences such as the World Summit for Children, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the World Conference on Human Rights, the World Summit for Social Development, the Fourth World Conference on Women and the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements. General Assembly resolution 50/124 reaffirmed the importance of the principles and concepts set out in the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21 for the purpose of implementing the Programme of Action and recognized that the implementation of the recommendations contained in the Programme of Action was the sovereign right of every country.

It was important to take note of the impact which the Conference had had on the World Summit for Social Development, the Fourth World Conference on Women, the second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements and the formulation of an agenda for development, in particular so as to encourage a greater investment in humanity. The Group of 77 and China stressed the importance of a firm commitment by participating States, international organizations, forums, agencies and non-governmental organizations which would reflect a new integrated approach to population and development in coordinating the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of follow-up actions. They stressed the need to maintain the momentum of the follow-up actions in order to make maximum use of the existing capacity of the United Nations in the area of population and development, including the Commission on Population and Development, the Population Division and the United Nations Population Fund, whose support was needed for the success of all activities in the Programme of Action, and called on them to collaborate closely in the preparation of reports for the Commission on Population and Development.

The Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements had marked the completion of a series of world conferences convened by the United Nations and the initiation of a global agenda to confront the complex challenges of a century of unprecedented change. The Group of 77 and China noted with interest that the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA, in decision 96/15, had decided that the allocation of resources should be based on a comprehensive assessment of the actual needs and requirements of countries. The Group of 77 and China hoped

that the follow-up of those strategies would have positive results from the implementation of the Programme of Action.

Mr. RAZA (Pakistan) said that satisfactory progress had been made to date in implementing the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, but the shortfall in resources for its continued implementation was a matter of concern to his delegation. He also reiterated the need for delegations to be kept informed of the latest developments in the work of the various Task Forces instituted by the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) to ensure coordinated follow-up to the Conference. Finally, he stressed that the integrated development approach to population and development issues was at least as important as the human-rights approach cited by the Executive Director of UNFPA.

Mr. GRANT (Ireland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, endorsed the draft resolution of the Commission on Population and Development on follow-up to the Conference and the draft decision taking note of the Commission's report on its twenty-ninth session and approving the provisional agenda for the thirtieth session. The European Union attached great importance to a review of the work programme for future Commission meetings and looked forward to consultations with the Director of the Population Division on how best to implement the Cairo Programme of Action while conserving the Commission's existing long-term work programme.

The European Union reaffirmed the importance of the Cairo Programme of Action and welcomed the progress made so far in implementing it, commending in particular the work of the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Implementation of the Programme of Action of the Conference in producing and disseminating implementation guidelines for the resident coordinator system. There should be no unnecessary duplication in the work of the three ACC Task Forces, particularly in such areas as the development of indicators, and it was essential for the results of their work to be integrated into the global review. There was also a need for further clarification of the linkages between the existing Conference guidelines and the expected outcomes of those Task Forces and for details of the relationship between the Task Force on Basic Social Services and the new Inter-Agency Committee on Women. Moreover, the European Union stressed the importance of the UNAIDS programme and requested further

information on agreements made to ensure an efficient division of labour by the United Nations development system in implementing the Cairo Programme of Action.

Ms. POLLACK (United States of America) stressed the importance of measuring the outcome of guidance provided by the United Nations system at the country level, and requested information on how the resident coordinators had applied the guidelines for implementing the Cairo Programme of Action in the context of the country strategy note (CSN) process.

It was essential that the two working groups of the Task Force on Basic Social Services for All (BSSA) should set clear objectives and that they should be held accountable for their products. Delegations should be informed about new activities being planned for the working groups.

Her delegation welcomed the new mandate and structure of the Commission on Population and Development and its role in monitoring implementation of the Cairo Programme of Action. The Commission should arrange for wide dissemination of its monitoring reports and should provide appropriate opportunities for non-governmental organizations to participate in all phases of its work. Her delegation also wished to know the outcome of recent consultations between the Director of the Population Division of UNESCO and the Bureau of the Commission, and it looked forward to the Commission's contribution to the dialogue on migration issues.

Mr. PANKIN (Russian Federation) said that his delegation supported the draft resolution entitled "Follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development" which the Commission was recommending for adoption by the Council. It also attached importance to Commission resolution 1996/1 entitled "Work programme in the field of population" and endorsed the need for a reappraisal of the shape, content and structure of the work programme. Due emphasis must be placed on the regional dimension of the issues considered in the Commission, and there must be an adequate reflection of the difference in situations and priorities in the area of population and development among individual regions of the world, including the group of countries with economies in transition.

The Council must coordinate the work of the Commission with that of other subsidiary bodies in the context of the forthcoming negotiations on the harmonization of the programmes and agendas of the functional commissions. That would help to prepare the Commission for its new mandate and at the same time

maintain in its work a reasonable balance between purely demographic issues and the more complex issues of sustainable development.

In connection with the late submission of documentation, the Council needed to take steps to determine why such delays occurred.

Ms. McNISH (Jamaica) expressed her delegation's support for the statement of the delegation of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and welcomed the progress made in implementing the Cairo Programme of Action. She stressed the importance of effective coordination among the various ACC Task Forces.

Citing the continued financial constraints hampering the implementation of the Cairo Programme of Action, she called for additional resources at the bilateral and multilateral levels and requested national Governments to monitor the flow of financial resources to national development programmes. The special role of the Population Division in monitoring and reviewing the implementation of the multi-year work programme should also be maintained, despite the current tight financial situation of the United Nations.

The occupational characteristics of international migration and the question of international migration policies should be considered at the thirtieth session of the Commission on Population and Development. Her delegation supported the adoption by the Council of the draft resolution and draft decision recommended by the Commission.

Mr. OKANIWA (Japan) expressed his delegation's support for the adoption by the Council of the draft resolution and draft decision recommended by the Commission on Population and Development and welcomed the innovations introduced by the Commission to help the United Nations system to monitor the follow-up to the Cairo Conference. The work of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Basic Social Services for All in the area of reproductive health had been particularly innovative but more information about the overall successes and failures of the various Task Forces would be useful for multilateral organizations and recipient and donor Governments. Indicators for monitoring progress towards specific follow-up goals would enable the various actors to coordinate their development efforts, and would also nurture a new global partnership between developing and developed countries. In overseeing efforts to raise the living standards of people in developing countries, the Task Forces themselves needed guidance from the Council. Accordingly, the Council and the

General Assembly should develop a comprehensive development strategy embodying common goals for all the players, including the Bretton Woods institutions, with guidance from the developing countries themselves.

Mr. SYARGEEU (Belarus) said that his delegation commended the results of the twenty-ninth session of the Commission on Population and Development. The highly unsatisfactory demographic situation in many developing countries, including the very high levels of child mortality, extreme poverty and low life expectancy, gave rise to justified concern by the world community and required a consolidation of efforts to assist those countries.

Although industrialized States with market economies and developing States were experiencing a steady improvement in the demographic situation, there was a sharp deterioration in States with economies in transition. Belarus was witnessing an alarming decline in the birth rate and rise in mortality. In 1995, the size of its population had fallen by 27,000. Because of the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster, there was an increase in malignant diseases, especially among children and young people. The adverse environmental situation had a direct influence on life expectancy. His delegation therefore felt that the mandate of UNFPA should be expanded to provide assistance to the countries with economies in transition in resolving their demographic problems.

Belarus wished to expand its cooperation with the Commission on Population and Development in studying national demographic processes in order to improve the legislative basis for the regulation of migration and in seeking ways of improving the demographic situation.

Mr. AVALLE (Argentina) joined other delegations in citing the importance of timely and comprehensive information on the work of the Task Forces. He welcomed the successes to date of the Commission on Population and Development in implementing the Cairo Programme of Action. The Commission should prepare for its forthcoming discussion of the impact of migration on economic growth and sustainable development by conducting broad consultations with agencies within and outside the United Nations system.

He commended the successful allocation of limited resources among the various agencies involved in the follow-up to the Cairo Conference, and cited the high level of South-South cooperation in implementing Conference targets. He also reiterated his delegation's view that the 20/20 principle was not the

most appropriate way to ensure that cooperation resources were allocated to social development programmes.

Ms. REBONG (Philippines) requested that more specific attention should be given to problems hampering the implementation at the national level of the Cairo Programme of Action, in order to facilitate discussion of the courses of action open to the Commission and the ACC Task Force. She welcomed the coordination with which the members of the United Nations system had followed up to date on the recommendations of the Cairo Conference and requested more complete information on the activities of the regional commissions in that regard. It was important to take into consideration the work being done by national Governments on indicators for monitoring progress towards specific follow-up goals.

In view of the decline in resources available for implementing Conference goals, she called upon the developed countries to increase their transfers of new resources to the developing countries for that purpose. The level of resources for implementing Conference recommendations was at least as important as the overall coordination of follow-up efforts.

She requested that the section of the Secretary-General's report on migration focusing on the linkages between migration and development should include inputs from all members of the United Nations system dealing with migration issues and from such other relevant intergovernmental bodies as the International Organization for Migration. Her delegation supported the adoption by the Council of the draft resolution and draft decision recommended by the Commission.

Mr. NDRI (Côte d'Ivoire) asked whether the effects of HIV/AIDS were being taken into account in the work which was being carried out in implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/124, since there had been no mention of that problem in the oral report.

Ms. SIBAL (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) said that UNESCO had participated actively in the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. As the lead agency for the working group on basic education with special attention to gender disparities, UNESCO had produced guidelines on how the United Nations system should work together, under the leadership of the United Nations resident

coordinators, to assist countries in related activities on basic education. UNESCO had also contributed substantially to the work of five other working groups.

UNESCO had participated in the twenty-ninth session of the Commission on Population and Development; its activities on the follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development had been reported in documents E/CN.9/1996/2 and E/CN.9/1996/4.

In collaboration with UNFPA, UNESCO continued to promote population information, education and communication projects in Africa, the Arab States, Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean, most of which had a component of reproductive rights and reproductive health issues. As part of its regular programme activities it had undertaken a comparative study on family life education, sex education and human sexuality. An important transdisciplinary and inter-agency project was the project on education for population and development. The programme "Learning without frontiers" aimed to offer the entire population greater opportunities for education.

UNESCO already had in place a transdisciplinary framework for developing and testing new modes of action which crossed traditional conceptual and institutional lines to promote education and information on population issues for sustainable development. Within UNESCO, the transdisciplinary framework was a means of bringing its work closer to the realities within Member States and making its work more effective in assisting and finding solutions.

The meeting rose at 6.20 p.m.